

No images? [Click here](#)



# American Spaces

## BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

**December 2023**

---

*With just over 600 locations, ECA's Office of American Spaces engages people worldwide through content, resources, and programming. American Spaces support U.S. foreign policy goals and strategically promote public diplomacy.*

---

*As always, thank you for sending in your comments and suggestions to [americanspaces@state.gov](mailto:americanspaces@state.gov). We hope you enjoy this issue!*

## HIV/AIDS Awareness Month



December marks National HIV/AIDS Awareness Month, a time to discuss sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), intravenous drug use, and vital resources for public health. Commencing on December 1 with World AIDS Day, we unite in awareness, support for those battling the virus, and remembrance for those lost to AIDS-related illnesses.

Distinguishing between HIV and AIDS is vital. HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) targets the immune system, transmitted through bodily fluids. Left untreated, it progresses to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), rendering individuals susceptible to infections and cancers.

While there's no cure, treatments mitigate symptoms and extend lives. Reflecting on the 'AIDS Epidemic,' AZT (zidovudine) in 1987 became a cornerstone in Combination Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), improving millions' quality of life and reducing AIDS risks. Jerome Horwitz, a medical researcher from Detroit, created AZT in 1964 while researching cancer at the Michigan Cancer Foundation. Approved by the U.S. FDA in

March 1987, AZT was a breakthrough and is now part of ART, demonstrating the resilience in the fight against HIV.

Global statistics underscore the challenge: 39 million people globally live with HIV, and nearly 37 million have succumbed to HIV-related illnesses. UNAIDS identified that 12 percent of HIV infections were from intravenous drug use. Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe bear the heaviest burdens.

Beyond statistics, National HIV/AIDS Awareness Month rallies against stigma and discrimination, uniting governments, NGOs, charities, and researchers in the HIV fight.

December is not the only month illuminating this issue. National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day in March and National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day in April spotlight community impacts.

#### **Engaging with awareness takes many forms:**

- Join local and national campaigns promoting safe sex practices.
- Embrace media engagement and social advocacy, sustaining the conversation.
- Support educational programs in schools, colleges, and community centers to debunk HIV/AIDS misconceptions, especially among those under 25.

#### **HIV/AIDS Global Statistics at a Glance:**

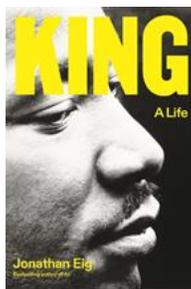
The US Government has [reported that approximately 39 million people worldwide](#) currently live with HIV, as of World AIDS Day 2023.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS also says that nearly 37 million people have died from HIV-related illnesses since the epidemic began in the 1980s.

Regionally, areas around the world most impacted by HIV include Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

## U.S. Culture:

### King: A Life, Book Discussion



Join the Smithsonian Institution for a discussion of Jonathan Eig's newest book, *King: A Life*, the first major biography in decades of Martin Luther King Jr.

Vividly written and exhaustively researched, the bestselling biographer weaves a new portrait of the preacher and activist who shook the world and gives us an intimate view of the courageous man who demanded peaceful protest for his movement.

Eig gives us an MLK for our times: a deep thinker and a brilliant strategist who led one of history's greatest movements, and

whose demands for racial and economic justice remain as urgent today as they were in his lifetime.

The author will be joined by Michel Martin, host of NPR's *Morning Edition*.

Join the program virtually: [Historically Speaking: King: A Life - YouTube](#), Monday, January 8, 2024 @7pm, EST.

---

## U.S. Speaker Spot

*As a partnership with the [Office of the U.S. Speaker Program](#), the American Spaces Newsletter is featuring selected speakers available for virtual programs with professional audiences on priority themes. For more information about the U.S. Speaker Program, and to submit a program request, please reach out to your local Public Diplomacy Section.*

A potential speaker to feature for January:



**[J. Kelly Beatty](#)** is a semi-retired senior editor of *Sky and Telescope*, a periodical for astronomers, and the author of "The New Solar System," known as the leading book on planetary

science and solar system studies. Beatty was one of the first journalists to gain access to the Soviet space program. Beatty can speak on a wide range of topics including planetary science, astronomy, stargazing, and Sputnik. He is available for traveling/virtual programs.

## Spotlight:

### EducationUSA



Acting DAS **Marianne Craven** (standing, center right) visited the **American Center in Kathmandu** on December 6 and participated in an EducationUSA event for students. She was pleased to see our programs in action in the field and was welcomed by **American Center Director Alina Shakya** (standing, far left).

## Did you know?

### New from VOA's 52 Documentary Series

In this next round of VOA's 52 Documentary series, we're excited to showcase the exceptional work of the winners of the VOA 5th Story Contest, representing the following VOA language services: Russian, Deewa, Indonesian, and Persian. These stories highlight the remarkable stories of women from different countries and shed light on under-reported issues within some of the 50 United States of America.

VOA's Story Contest is an annual pitch contest open to VOA producers. Read more details on our VOA Public Relations Web Site - Inside VOA:

<https://www.insidevoa.com/a/7365932.html>

### "Pale Blue Dot" Space Challenge



The U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna (UNVIE) and NASA, in collaboration with the UN Office for

Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), recently launched the Pale Blue Dot Challenge, a global competition where winners will land at Space Camp! As part of this challenge, participants create data visualizations using Earth observation data to help advance the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on food security, water and climate. The challenge closes Jan. 26, 2024, and the winners will receive an invitation to the next edition of the 10-day space study program (also known as Space Camp) in Huntsville, Alabama, with travel, lodging and tuition covered. For more information and to register, visit:

<https://www.drivendata.org/competitions/256/pale-blue-dot/page/802/>

---

## Food Security Toolkit now Available



The Managing American Spaces website now has a [Food Security Toolkit](#) available for American Spaces programming. This new toolkit features sections on what Food Security is, definitions, initiatives in biotechnology, some solutions, and lesson plans for American Spaces.

We hope you enjoy its use and look forward to any feedback you might have about it and other toolkits.

## Calendar of Events

As always, the full calendar is available on the American Spaces [website](#).

### December:

**December 1:** [World AIDS Day](#) and [Toolkit](#)

**December 2:** [International Day for the Abolition of Slavery](#)

**December 3:** [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) and [toolkit](#)

**December 4 - December 10:** [Computer Science Education Week](#)

**December 5:** [International Volunteer Day](#)

**December 7 - December 15:** Hanukkah (see [Jewish American Heritage Month Toolkit](#))

**December 7:** [Letter Writing Day](#)

**December 9:** [International Anti-corruption Day](#)

**December 18:** [International Migrants Day](#)

**December 20:** [International Human Solidarity Day](#)

**December 25:** Christmas Day

**December 26 - January 1:** Kwanzaa

**January: Human Trafficking Awareness Month** – [Human Trafficking Awareness Toolkit](#)

**January 2: Science Fiction Day**

**January 4: World Braille Day**

**January 11: Human Trafficking Awareness Day** see [Human Trafficking Awareness Toolkit](#)

**January 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Day** – [Kanopy documentary](#), [Martin Luther King Jr. Posters](#), and [American History and Culture Toolkit](#)

**January 16: National Religious Freedom Day** – see [First Amendment Rights: Freedom of Religion Toolkit](#)

**January 24: International Day of Education**

**January 25: Opposite Day**

**January 27: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust**

**January 29: Puzzle Day**

**February: African-American History Month** - see [Programming toolkit](#)

**February 2: World Wetlands Day**

**February 4: International Day of Human Fraternity**

**February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation**

February 10: [World Pulses Day](#)

February 11: **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

- [I am a Girl](#)
- [Hidden Figures Discussion Guide](#)
- [American Women in STEM Posters](#)

February 13: [World Radio Day](#)

February 17: [Random Act of Kindness Day](#)

February 19: [Presidents Day – Resource Toolkit](#)

February 20: **World Day of Social Justice** - See [these resources](#)

- Consider the [Civil Society Certification](#)

February 21: [International Mother Language Day](#)

-----

Thanks to all of you who have shared your programming ideas and highlights with your colleagues through our American Spaces FB page. You can continue to share your news and information by emailing us at [AmericanSpaces@state.gov](mailto:AmericanSpaces@state.gov). If you have any questions or content to add, email [Karlene Noel Jennings](mailto:Karlene.Noel.Jennings).

To add someone to this newsletter, email us at [AmericanSpaces@state.gov](mailto:AmericanSpaces@state.gov).

**Engage & Grow**  
(Social Media Playbook)

## December is Human Rights Month #HumanRightsMonth

Please consult with your REPS and/or your local Public Diplomacy Section for advice about current Department of State social media posture or specific situations. Thank you.

Digital assets for use by social media managers for American Spaces are available from the [albums in the American Spaces Facebook group](#). We currently have images formatted for Facebook and Instagram for upcoming themes and you can customize the assets to fit your local community's needs.

Content Commons 2.0 was just released on November 7, 2023. Content Commons is the central Department repository for messaging guidance and digital content. It now boasts an improved search function, content in reverse chronological order that showcases the most relevant content first, and the future capacity to share content across posts. The redesign is meant to serve all PD Communicators for urgent messaging on press, as well as longer-term content for Ambassadors' speeches, event planning, and targeted audience messaging. You can find it [here](#).

## Engage & Grow Digital Crops

### Farmcraft 2024 - Gaming for a Sustainable Future

In the ever-evolving landscape of technology and global challenges, an innovative initiative has emerged, seamlessly blending the exciting world of gaming with the real-world complexities of agriculture, food security, and sustainable development. We are delighted to introduce you to Farmcraft 2024, a pioneering endeavor that invites participants to

explore, learn, and make a tangible impact on our planet through the power of e-sports.

## **Farmcraft Unveiled: A Fusion of Gaming and Education**

Farmcraft is more than just a gaming competition; it's a captivating journey into the intricacies of agriculture in an era of digital transformation. At its heart, Farmcraft is a bridge that connects the virtual and the tangible, offering participants a chance to experience the complexities of modern agriculture using the Minecraft Education Edition platform.

### **Why Farmcraft?**

As our world grapples with pressing issues like climate change, food security, and sustainable development, Farmcraft steps forward as a catalyst for positive change. Whether your participants are seasoned gamers or new to the gaming world, Farmcraft offers them a unique opportunity to enrich their understanding of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) disciplines and explore promising career paths.

#### **A Sneak Peek into the Farmcraft Experience**

- **Gaming Challenges:** Farmcraft challenges participants to sustainably cultivate virtual crops while tackling real-world agricultural dilemmas. It's a dynamic blend of fun and learning.
- **Digital Agriculture:** Participants will immerse themselves into the realm of digital technologies revolutionizing modern farming. They will discover how innovation is shaping the future of agriculture.

- **Global Connection:** They will join a global community of gamers, farmers, scientists, and experts who share the same passion for making a difference in the world.
- **Teamwork:** Participants will enhance their collaboration and teamwork skills while having a blast playing a game that matters.
- **Beyond the Game:** Farmcraft extends beyond the gaming screen. Engage in non-gaming activities that contribute to sustainable agriculture, food security, and global understanding.

### Save the Dates

- **Pre-Season:** February 1 through March 7
- **Regular Season:** March 11 to April 11

### Join the Movement

Are you ready to embark on this incredible journey with us? Over the coming weeks, we will be sharing updates, tutorials, and resources that will enrich the Farmcraft 2024 experience. Farmcraft is more than just a game; it's a mission to make a real impact.

Together, we'll learn, grow, and become champions of positive change in building a more sustainable future. Stay tuned for more details, and let's make Farmcraft 2024 an unforgettable adventure!



# American Spaces

Want to learn about more events in your area or causes you care about? Tell us about yourself and your interests here:

[Update My Preferences](#)

Office of American Spaces

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

SA-5, 2200 C Street, NW

Washington, DC 20037

[americanspaces@state.gov](mailto:americanspaces@state.gov)

<https://americanspaces.state.gov/>

This email was sent by the U.S. Department of State. If you no longer would like to receive these messages, unsubscribe below.

[Unsubscribe](#)